A

PLAIN and SERIOUS

ADDRESS

TO THE

Master of a Family,

ON THE

Important SUBJECT

OF

FAMILY-RELIGION.

Family Prayer

By P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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For C. HITCH and L. HAWES, J. BUCKLAND, J. RIVINGTON, R. BALDWIN, W. JOHNSTON, J. RICHARDSON, S. CROWDER and Co. T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, T. FIELD, and H. PAYNE and W. CROPLEY.

M DCC LXI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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Master of a Family,

On the Important SUBJECT of

FAMILY-RELIGION.

SIR,

YOU may easily apprehend, that the many Interruptions to which personal Visits are liable, make it difficult for Ministers to find a convenient Time, in which they may apply themselves suitably and largely to those committed to their Care; or at least, if they resolve to do it, will necessarily make their Progress thro' large Congregations very slow. I therefore take this Method of visiting you *while alone*, and of addressing you on the very important Subject of *Family-Religion*. For your own Sake, and the Sake of those dearest to you, I intreat you to give me a calm attentive Hearing. And I would particularly desire, that if it be by any Means practicable, (as with a little Contrivance

and Reſolution I hope it may,) you would ſecure one Hour on the Morning of the Lord's-Day after you receive it, not merely to run over this Letter in a curſory Manner, but deliberately to weigh and conſider it, and to come to ſome Determination, as in the Sight of GOD, that *you will*, or that *you will not*, comply with the *Petition* which it brings; if I may not rather ſay, with the *Demand* which *in his Name* it makes upon you.

As I purpoſe to deliver it to every Maſter of a Family under my ſtated Care, or to every Miſtreſs where there is no Maſter, (that no Offence of any Kind may be taken, which it is in my Power to prevent,) I know it will come to many, who have long been exemplary for their Diligence and Zeal in the Duties I am recommending; to many, whom their own Experience hath inſtructed in the Pleaſures and Advantages which flow from them; an Experience, which will inforce them more effectually than any Thing which it is poſſible for me to ſay. Such will, I hope, by what they read, be confirmed in purſuing the good Reſolution they have taken, and the good Cuſtoms they have formed; and will alſo be excited more earneſtly to endeavour to contribute towards introducing the like, into other Families over which they have any Influence, and eſpecially into thoſe which may branch out from their own, by the Settlement of Children or Servants. In this View, as well as to awaken their Thankfulneſs to Divine Grace, which hath inclined them to the Diſcharge of their Duty in ſo great, yet ſo

frequently

frequently neglected, an Article of it, I hope the Heads of praying Families will not peruſe this Letter in vain. But it is intended as an Addreſs to thoſe, who have hitherto lived in the Omiſſion of it: And if there were *but one* ſuch Maſter of a Family under my Care, I would gladly ſubmit to the Labour in which I am now engaging *for his Sake alone*. To ſuch therefore I now turn myſelf; and O that Divine Grace might engage every one of ſuch a Character to hear me with Attention, and might inforce upon his Conſcience the Weight of Reaſons, the Evidence of which the Loweſt may receive, and to which it is impoſſible that the Higheſt ſhould find any Thing ſolid to object!

O my dear Friend, whoever you are, (for I know no one under my Care to whom I may not addreſs that Appellation,) give me leave to tell you plainly, that while I write this I have that awakening Scripture in my View: *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon THE FAMILIES THAT CALL NOT ON THY NAME* *. I appeal to you as a Man of ordinary Senſe and Underſtanding, (as it needs no more,) to judge whether this do not ſtrongly imply, that it may be taken for granted, *every Family*, which is not a *Heathen Family*, which is not quite ignorant of the living and true GOD, *will call upon his Name*. Well may it then pain my Heart, to think that there ſhould be a profeſſedly *Chriſtian Family*, whom this dreadful Character ſuits. Well may it pain

* Jer. x. 25.

my Heart, to think of the *Divine Fury*, which may be *poured out* on the Heads and on the Members of it: And well may it make me desirous, to do my utmoſt to ſecure you and yours, from every Appearance, from every Poſſibility, of ſuch Danger. Excuſe the Earneſtneſs with which I may addreſs you. I really fear, leſt *while you delay*, the *Fire* of the Divine Diſpleaſure ſhould *fall upon you* * : And as I adore the Patience of GOD in having thus long ſuſpended the Storm, I am anxious about every Hour's Delay, leſt it ſhould fall the heavier.

I WILL therefore, as plainly and ſeriouſly as I can, endeavour to convince you of your Duty, if peradventure you are not already ſecretly convinced of it; as truly I believe, moſt who neglect it, under the regular Adminiſtration of Goſpel Ordinances, are.—I will then touch on a few of thoſe Objections, which have been pleaded to excuſe in ſome Degree ſo ſhameful an Omiſſion.—And this will naturally lead me to conclude with a few Hints, which may ſerve by way of Direction, for the proper Introduction and Diſcharge of the Services to which I am endeavouring to engage you.

I MEAN not to handle the Subject at large, which would afford abundant Matter for a conſiderable Volume; as indeed ſeveral Volumes have been written upon it, by Divines of different Denominations, who, however various in other Opinions, agree here; as what intelligent Chriſtian can diſagree? But I mean to ſuggeſt a few

* Gen. xix. 16, 17.

a few plain Things, which it is evident you have not ſufficiently conſidered, and which if duly weighed, may by the Bleſſing of GOD anſwer my preſent Purpoſe. Now the Arguments I ſhall propoſe will be ſuch, that if you will not regard them, little is to be hoped from any other: For ſurely the Mind of Man can diſcover none of greater and more univerſal Importance; tho' I readily acknowledge, that many others might inforce them with greater Energy and Addreſs. Yet if the Deſire, the moſt earneſt Deſire of ſucceeding can add any of the proper Arts of Perſuaſion, they will not be wanting here. And I would fain ſpeak, as one who conſiders, how much of the Glory of GOD, how much of your own Happineſs, and that of your dear Children, for Time and Eternity, depends on the Succeſs of what I am now to lay before you.

WHAT I deſire and intreat of you is, that you would honour and acknowledge GOD in your Families, by calling them together every Day, to hear ſome part of his Word read to them, and to offer, for a few Minutes at leaſt, your united Confeſſions, Prayers, and Praiſes to him. And is this a Cauſe, that ſhould need to be pleaded at large by a great Variety of united Motives? Truly the Petition ſeems ſo reaſonable, and a Compliance with it from one who has not quite renounced Religion might ſeem ſo natural, that one would think the bare propoſing it might ſuffice. Yet Experience tells us, it is much otherwiſe. This Letter will come into the Hands of ſome, who, tho' they maintain a publick Profeſſion of Religion, have been

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again and again exhorted to it in vain, and that perhaps for ſucceeding Years. I might ſay a great deal to *upbraid* ſuch eſpecially, on account of this Neglect; but I rather chuſe to *intreat* to the future Performance of the Duty; humbly hoping, that, criminal as former Negligence has been, a gracious GOD will mercifully forgive it, to thoſe who repent and deſire to reform.

AND O that I could engage you to this, by repreſenting in the plaineſt, kindeſt, and moſt affectionate Manner, the *Reaſonableneſs*, and *Advantage* of this Duty! For if it be reaſonable, if it be evidently advantageous, there are numberleſs *general Precepts of Scripture* which muſt comprehend and inforce it, if it were leſs immediately ſupported than it is by *particular Paſſages*; which yet, as I ſhall preſently ſhew, do many of them ſtrongly recommend it to us.

CONSIDER, Sir, for I addreſs myſelf to every particular Perſon, ſeriouſly conſider *the apparent* REASONABLENESS *of Family-Religion*. Muſt not your Conſciences preſently tell you, it is fit that Perſons who receive ſo many Mercies together, ſhould acknowledge them together? Can you in your own Mind be ſatisfied, that you and your neareſt Relatives ſhould pay no joint Homage to that GOD, who hath ſet you in your Family, and who hath given to you, and to the ſeveral Members of it, ſo many domeſtick Enjoyments? your Creator and theirs, your Preſerver and theirs, your daily Benefactor and theirs? Can it be right, if you have any Senſe of theſe Things each of you in your own Hearts, that the

Senſe

Senſe of them ſhould be concealed and ſmothered there, and that you ſhould never join in your grateful Acknowledgments to him: Can you imagine it reaſonable, that when you have a conſtant Dependance upon him for ſo many Mercies, without the Concurrence of which your Family would be a Scene of Miſery, you ſhould never preſent yourſelves together in his Preſence, to aſk them at his Hand? Upon what Principles is Publick Worſhip to be recommended and urged, if not by ſuch as have their proportionable Weight here?

INDEED the Force of theſe Conſiderations hath not only been known and acknowledged by the People of GOD in all Ages; we have not only *Noah* and *Abraham*, *Joſhua* and *David*, *Job* and *Daniel*, each under a much darker Diſpenſation than ours, as Examples of it: But we may venture to ſay, that where-ever there has been a Profeſſion of any Kind of Religion, it has been brought into private Houſes as well as publick Temples. The poor *Heathens*, as we certainly know from the remaining Monuments of them, had their *Lares* and their *Penates*, which were Houſhold Images, ſome of them in private Chapels, and others about the common Hearth, where the Family uſed to worſhip them by frequent Prayers and Sacrifices. And the *Braſs*, and *Wood*, and *Stone*, of which they conſiſted, ſhall (as it were) *cry out againſt you*, ſhall riſe up againſt you and condemn you, if while you call yourſelves the Worſhippers of the one Living and Eternal GOD, and boaſt in the Revelation you have received by his Prophets and by his Son, you preſume to omit an Homage, which

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the ſtupid Worſhippers of ſuch Vanities as theſe failed not to preſent to them, while they called them their Gods. Be perſuaded then I beſeech you, to be conſiſtent in your Conduct. Either give up all Pretences to Religion, or maintain a ſteady and uniform Regard to it, at home as well as abroad, in the Family, as well as in the Cloſet, or at Church. But the Reaſonableneſs of this Duty, and the Obligations which bind you in Conſcience to the Practice of it, will farther appear, if you conſider,

THE many ADVANTAGES, which will, by the Divine Bleſſing, attend a proper Diſcharge of it. And here, I would more particularly repreſent the good Influence, which Family Devotions are likely to have,—upon the young Perſons committed to your Care,—upon your own Hearts,—and upon the Advancement of a general Reformation, and the Propagation of Religion to thoſe that are yet unborn.

CONSIDER in the firſt Place, what is moſt obvious, the happy Influence which the Duty I am recommending might have upon the young Members of your Family, the *Children* and *Servants* committed to your Care. For I now conſider you, as a Parent, and a Maſter. *The Father of a Family* is a Phraſe, that comprehends both theſe Relations; and with great Propriety, as Humanity obliges us to endeavour to take a parental Care of all under our Roof. And indeed,

You ought to conſider your *Servants*, in this View, with a tender Regard. They are probably

bly in the Flower of Life, for that is the Age which is commonly ſpent in Service; and you ſhould recollect how poſſible it is, that this may be, if rightly improved, the beſt Opportunity their whole Life may afford them for learning Religion, and being brought under the Power of it. If your Servants are already inſtructed in it, by being brought up in Families where theſe Duties have been maintained; let them not, if they ſhould finally miſcarry, have Cauſe to impute it to you, and to teſtify before GOD in the Day of their Condemnation, "that it was under "your Roof that they learnt the Neglect and "Forgetfulneſs of GOD, and of all that their "pious Parents, perhaps in a much inferior Sta-"tion of Life to you, had in earlier Days been "attempting to teach them; to teach them, in "Moments taken from Labour, or from Re-"poſe almoſt neceſſary for their Subſiſtence." On the other hand, if they come to you quite ignorant of Religion, (as if they come from prayerleſs Families, it is very probable that they do,) have Compaſſion upon them, I intreat you, and endeavour to give them thoſe Advantages which they never yet had; and which it is too probable, as Things are generally managed, they never will have, if you will not afford them.

BUT I would eſpecially, if I might be allowed to borrow the pathetick Words of *Job* *, *intreat you by the Children of your own Body*. I would now as it were preſent them all before you, and beſeech you by all the Bowels of parental Affection, (which I have myſelf ſo ſtrongly felt,) that to

* Job xix. 17.

to all the other Tokens of Tenderneſs and Love, you would not refuſe to add this, without which many of the reſt may be worſe than in vain.

Give me leave to plead with you, as the Inſtruments of introducing them into Being. O remember, it is indeed a debaſed and corrupted Nature you have conveyed to them. Conſider, that the World, into which you have been the Means of bringing them, is a Place in which they are ſurrounded with many Temptations, and in which, as they advance in Life, they muſt expect many more; ſo that in plain Terms, it is on the whole much to be feared, that they will periſh in the Ignorance and Forgetfulneſs of God, if they do not learn from you to love and ſerve him. For how can it be expected they ſhould learn this at all, if you give them no Advantages for receiving and practiſing the Leſſon at Home?

And let me further urge and intreat you to remember, that theſe dear Children, whoſe tender Age, and perhaps amiable Forms and Diſpoſitions, might attract the Affection and Solicitude of Strangers, are committed to your eſpecial and immediate Care by God their Creator. And he has made them thus dependent upon you, and others that have in their Infancy and Childhood the Care of them, that there might be hereafter a better Opportunity of forming their Minds, and of influencing them to a right Temper and Conduct. And can this by any Means be effectually done, if you do not at proper Times call them together, to attend to the Inſtructions of the Word of God, and to join in ſolemn Prayers and Supplications to him? At leaſt

leaſt is it poſſible, it ſhould be done any other Way with equal Advantage, if this be not added to the reſt?

FAMILY Worſhip is a moſt proper Way of teaching Children Religion, as you teach them Language, by inſenſible Degrees; a little one Day, and a little another; for to them *Line muſt be upon Line, and Precept upon Precept.* They may learn to conceive aright of the Divine Perfections, when they hear you daily acknowledging and adoring them: Their Hearts may be early touched with pious Remorſe for Sin, when they hear your Confeſſions poured out before GOD: They will know what Mercies they are to aſk for themſelves, by obſerving what Turn your Petitions take: Your Interceſſions may diffuſe into their Minds a Spirit of Love to Mankind, a Concern for the Intereſt of the Church, and of their Country; and what is not I think by any Means to be neglected, Sentiments of Loyalty towards our Sovereign and his Family, when they hear you daily invoking the Divine Bleſſing upon them: And your ſolemn Thankſgivings for the Bounties of Providence, and for Benefits of a Spiritual Nature, may affect their Hearts with thoſe gracious Impreſſions towards the gracious Author of all, which may excite in their little Breaſts Love to him, the moſt noble and genuine Principle of all true and acceptable Religion. Thus they may become Chriſtians by inſenſible Degrees, and grow in the Knowledge and Love of the Truth, as they do in Stature.

BY obſerving your reverent and ſolemn Deportment, (as reverent and ſolemn I hope it will

always at ſuch Seaſons be,) they may get ſome Notion of an inviſible Being, before they are of Age to underſtand the Definition of the Term *GOD*; and may feel their Minds ſecretly impreſſed with an humble Awe and Veneration, before they can explain to you their Senſe of it. And whatever Inſtructions you give them concerning his Nature and his Will, and the Way of obtaining his Favour by Jeſus Chriſt, all your Admonitions relating to the Importance of that inviſible World we are going to, and the neceſſary Preparation for it, will be greatly illuſtrated by the Tenor of your daily Devotions, as well as by thoſe excellent Leſſons which the Word of GOD, when ſolemnly read to them Morning and Evening, will afford. Nor is it by any Means to be forgotten, that while they hear themſelves, and their own Concerns, mentioned before GOD in Prayer, while they hear you earneſtly pleading for the Divine Bleſſing upon them, (eſpecially if it be in Expreſſions wiſely varied, as ſome particular Occurrences in their Lives and in yours may require,) it may very probably be a Means of moving their impreſſible Hearts; as it may powerfully convince them of your deep and tender Concern for their Good, and may add great Weight to the Inſtructions you may addreſs to them: So that it may appear, even *while you are praying for them*, that GOD *hears* *. And indeed I have known ſome Inſtances of excellent Perſons, who have dated their Converſion to GOD, even after they had begun viſibly to degenerate, from the Prayers, from the ſerious and pathe-

* Iſa. lxv. 24.

pathetick Prayers, which they have heard their pious Fathers, perhaps I might add their pious Mothers, preſenting before GOD on their Account.

INDEED were this Duty properly attended to, it might be expected, that all Chriſtian Families would, according to their reſpective Sizes and Circumſtances, become Nurſeries of Piety; and you would ſee in the moſt convincing View, the Wiſdom of Providence, in making human Infants ſo much more dependent on their Parents, and ſo much more incapable to ſhift for themſelves, than the Offspring of inferior Creatures are.

LET me then intreat you, my dear Friend, to look on your Children the very next Time you ſee them, and aſk your own Heart, How you can anſwer it to GOD, and to them, that you deprive them of ſuch Advantages as theſe? Advantages, without which it is to be feared, your Care of them in other Reſpects will turn to but little Account, ſhould they be ever ſo proſperous in Life. For what is Proſperity in Life without the Knowledge, and Fear, and Love of GOD? what, but the Poiſon of the Soul, which ſwells and kills it? what, but the Means of making it more certainly, more deeply, more intolerably miſerable; when all its tranſient and empty Amuſements are paſſed away, *like a Dream, when one awaketh* *? In ſhort, not to mention the happy Influence it may have on their Temporal Affairs, by drawing down the Divine Bleſſing, and by forming their Minds to thoſe Virtues, which pave the Way to Wealth and Reputation,

* Pſal. lxxiii. 20.

Health and Contentment, which make no Enemies, and attract many Friends; it is, with reſpect to the Eternal World, the greateſt Cruelty to your Children thus to neglect giving them thoſe Advantages, which *no other Cares in Education itſelf* excluſive of theſe can afford: And it is impoſſible, you ſhould ever be able to give them any other Equivalent. If you do your Duty in this reſpect, they will have Reaſon to bleſs you living and dying; and if you neglect it, take care that you and they come not, in Conſequence of that Neglect, into a World, where (horrid as the Thought may now ſeem,) you will for ever be curſing each other. And thus I am fallen inſenſibly, becauſe ſo naturally, from what I was ſaying of the Concern and Intereſt of thoſe under your Care, to your own, ſo far as it may be diſtinguiſhed from theirs.

Let me therefore preſs you to conſider, how much *your own Intereſt* is concerned in the Matter; the whole of your Intereſt, both Spiritual, and Temporal.

Your *Spiritual Intereſt* is infinitely the greateſt, and therefore I will begin with that. And here let me ſeriouſly aſk you, Do you not need thoſe Advantages for Religion, which the Performance of Family-Duty will give you, added to thoſe of a more ſecret and a more publick Nature, if peradventure they are regarded by you? Theſe Inſtructions, theſe Adorations, theſe Confeſſions, theſe Supplications, theſe Interceſſions, theſe Thankſgivings, which may be ſo uſeful to your Children and Servants, may they not be uſeful to

yourſelves? May not your own Hearts have ſome peculiar Advantage for being impreſſed, when you are the Mouth of others in theſe domeſtick Devotions, beyond what in a private Station of Life it is otherwiſe poſſible you ſhould have? O theſe Leſſons of Religion to your own Souls, every Morning and Evening, might be (if I may be allowed the Expreſſion,) either the Seed, or Foretaſte, of Salvation to you. Nay, the remoter Influence they may have on your Conduct, in other Reſpects, and at other Times, when conſidered merely in the general as Religious Exerciſes performed by you in your Family, is to be recollected as an Argument of vaſt Importance.

A Sense of common Decency would engage you, if you pray with your Family, to *avoid a great many Evils*, which would appear *doubly Evil* in a Father or a Maſter, who kept up ſuch Religious Exerciſes in his Houſe. I will not now, Sir, ſpeak of yourſelf, for I would not offend by ſuppoſing any Thing groſsly bad of you. But do you imagine, that if reading the Scripture and Family-Prayer were introduced into the Houſes of ſome of your Neighbours, Drunkenneſs and Lewdneſs, and Curſing and Swearing, and profaning the Lord's Day, would not, like ſo many *evil Dæmons*, be quickly driven out? The Maſter of the Family would not for Shame indulge them, if he had nothing more than the Form of Duty kept up; and *his* Reformation, tho' only external, and at firſt on a Kind of Conſtraint, would carry with it the Reformation of many more, who have ſuch a Dependance on his Favour as they would not ſacrifice, tho' by a Madneſs very

prevalent among the Children of Men, they can venture to ſacrifice their Souls to every Trifle.

And may it not perhaps be your more immediate Concern, to recollect, that if you prayed with your Family, you would *yourſelf* be more careful to *abſtain fromall Appearance of Evil* * ? You would find out a Way to ſuppreſs that Turbulency of Paſſion, which may now be ready to break out before you are aware, and other Imprudences, in which your own Heart would check you by ſaying, "Does this become one, "that is by and by to kneel down with his Do-"meſticks, his Children and Servants, and a-"dore God with them, and pray againſt every "Thing which diſpleaſes God, and makes us "unfit for the Heavenly World?" I will not ſay, this will cure every Thing that is wrong; but I believe you are already perſuaded, it would often have a very good Influence. And I fear, it is the ſecret Deſire of indulging ſome Irregularities without ſuch a Reſtraint, that, infamous as ſuch a Victory is, hath driven out Family-Prayer from ſeveral Houſes were it was once maintained, and hath excluded it from others. But if you have any ſecret Diſinclination of Heart riſing againſt it in this View, it becomes you ſeriouſly to take the Alarm; for, to ſpeak plainly, I hardly know a blacker Symptom of Damnation, than a Fear of being reſtrained in the Commiſſion of Sin.

After this it may ſeem a Matter of ſmaller Importance, to urge the good Influence which a proper Diſcharge of Family-Duty may have upon your own *Temporal Affairs*; both by reſtraining

* 1 Theſſ. v. 22.

ing you from many Evils, and engaging you to a proper Conduct yourself, and also by impressing your Children and Servants with a Sense of Religion. And it is certain, the more careful they are of their Duty to GOD, the more likely they will be to perform their Duty to you. Nor can any Thing strength your natural Authority among them more, than your presiding in such Solemnities, if supported by a suitable Conduct. But I would hope, nobler Motives will have a superior Weight. And therefore waving this Topick, I intreat you as the last Argument to consider,

THE Influence it may have on a *general Reformation*, and on the *Propagation of Religion* to those who are yet unborn. You ought to consider every Child and Servant in your Family, as one who may be a Source, not only of Life, but (in some degree) of Character and Happiness, to those who are hereafter to arise into Being; yea, whose Conduct may in Part affect those that are to descend from them in the following Generation. If they grow up, while under your Eye, ignorant of Religion, they will certainly be much less capable of teaching it to others; for these are the Years of Discipline, and if they be neglected now, there is little Probability of their receiving After-instruction. Nor is this all the evil Consequence; for it is highly probable, that they will think themselves authorized by your Example to a like Negligence, and so you may entail *Heathenism* under disregarded Christian Forms, on your Descendants and theirs in Ages to come.

Whereas

Whereas your Diligence and Zeal might be remembered, and imitated by them, perhaps when you are in your Grave; and the Stock which they first received from you, might with rich Improvements be communicated to great Numbers, so that *one Generation after another* might learn to fear and serve the LORD. On the whole, GOD only knows what a Church may arise from one godly Family, what a Harvest may spring up from a single Seed; and on the other Hand, it is impossible to say, how many Souls may at length perish by the treacherous Neglect of a single Person, and to speak plainly, by your own.

THESE, Sir, are the Arguments I had to plead with you, and which I have selected out of many more: And now give me leave seriously to ask you, as in the Presence of GOD, whether there be not on the whole, an unanswerable Force in them? And if there be, what follows, but that you immediately yield to that Force, and set up Family-Worship *this very Day*. For methinks, I would hardly thank you for a Resolution to do it *to Morrow*, so little do I expect from that Resolution. How can you excuse yourself in the continued Omission? Bring the Matter before GOD: He *will* be the final Judge of it; and if you cannot debate the Question as in his Presence, it is a Sign of a bad Cause, and of a bad Heart too; which is conscious of the Badness of the Cause, and yet will not give it up, nor comply with a Duty, of your Obligations to which you are secretly convinced, and yet in effect say, "I will go on in this Sin, and venture the

"Con-

" Conſequence." O it is a dreadful Venture, and will be found in effect *provoking the* LORD *to Jealouſy, as if you were ſtronger than he* *.

BUT perhaps there may ariſe in your Mind ſome OBJECTIONS, which may in ſome Degree break the Force of this Conviction, and which in that View it may be expedient for me to diſcuſs a little, before I diſmiſs the Subject and cloſe my Addreſs to you. You may perhaps be ready to object,

1. " THAT *Family-Prayer is not* in ſo many " Words *commanded in Scripture*; and there- " fore however expedient in ſome Caſes, it " cannot be ſo univerſal and ſo important a " Duty, as we repreſent it."

I ANSWER plainly, that it is ſtrongly recommended in Scripture, and conſequentially commanded; as there are Precepts, which plainly include, tho' they do not particularly expreſs it. And I appeal to yourſelf in this Matter. When GOD is repreſented as giving this Reaſon to his Angels for a particular Favour to be beſtowed on *Abraham*, becauſe *he knew, that he would command his Children and Houſhold to keep the Way of the* LORD, *that he might obtain the Bleſſing promiſed* †; did he not intend to declare his Approbation of the Care he took to ſupport Religion in his Family? And can it be ſupported in a total Neglect of Prayer?—Again, Do ye not in your Conſcience think, that the Spirit of GOD meant,

* 1 Cor. x. 22. † Gen. xviii. 19.

meant, that we ſhould take *Joſhua* for an Example, when it tells us, that he reſolved, and publickly declared the Reſolution, *that he and his Houſe would ſerve the* LORD *: which muſt expreſs a religious Care of his Family too?—Do you not believe, that this bleſſed Spirit meant it as a Commendation of *Job*, that he *offered Sacrifices for all his Children* †; Sacrifices, undoubtedly attended with Prayers; when he feared leſt the Gaiety of their Hearts in their ſucceſſive Feaſtings might have betrayed them into ſome moral Evil?—And was it not to do an Honour to *David*, that the Scripture informs us, that he *went Home tob leſs his Houſhold* ‖; that is, to perform ſome ſolemn Act of domeſtick Worſhip, when he had been ſpending the whole Day in publick Devotions?—What think you of the Example of *Daniel*, who *prayed in his Houſe, with his Windows open toward Jeruſalem* §, and would rather run the Riſque of being caſt into the Den of Lions, and being torn in Pieces by thoſe cruel Beaſts, than he would either omit or conceal it?—And do you think, that when our *bleſſed Lord*, whoſe whole Life was employed in religious Services, ſo frequently *took his Diſciples apart to pray with them*, that he did not intend this as an Example to us, of praying with thoſe under our ſpecial Care, or in other Words, with the Members of our own Family, who are moſt immediately ſo?—Or can you by any imaginable Artifice delude yourſelf ſo far as to think, that when we are ſolemnly charged and commanded

* Joſh. xxiv 15. † Job. i. 5. ‖ 2 Sam. vi. 20.
§ Dan. vi. 10,

manded to pray *with all Prayer and Supplication* *, this Kind of Prayer is not included in that Apostolical Injunction?

On the whole, the Question lies in a very little Room. Have I proved by what I have said before, that *Family-Prayer* is a reasonable Thing? that it has a Tendency to promote the Honour of God, and the Interest of Religion, and your own Salvation, with that of those who are committed to your Care? If you are really convinced of this, then all the general Precepts which require the Love of God and your Neighbour, all that recommend a Regard to the Interest of Christ, and a Concern for our own everlasting Happiness, bind it in this Connection as certainly upon us, as if it had been commanded in Words as express as those, in which we are required † *to enter into our Closets, and there to pray to our Father which is in secret* ‖.

And I will farther add, that if the Care of *Family-Religion* be, (as I suppose every Man's Conscience will secretly testify that it is,) a proper Part of a *Religious Education*, then all those many Passages of Scripture which recommend this, must in all Reason be understood as including that. But perhaps you may be ready to plead,

2. "That

* Eph. vi. 18. † Matt. vs. 6.

‖ This Part of the Argument is inforced with peculiar Strength by that great and excellent Writer Mr. *Howe*, in his *Posthumous Sermons* on the Subject; which I earnestly recommend to every Reader that can get an Opportunity of perusing them.

2 "THAT it is *generally neglected.*"

YET ſcarce can you have made or thought of this Objection, but you will ſee at the firſt Glance, that this muſt turn upon yourſelf, rather than on the whole appear favourable to your Cauſe. It is the Reproach of our Age, if it be indeed *generally neglected.* And if it be generally excluded from the Families of the Rich and the Great, (who too frequently ſet the Faſhion, where they are moſt apt to ſet it wrong,) let it rather awaken a generous Indignation in our Breaſt, to think that it is ſo excluded. At leaſt, let it awaken a holy Zeal to exert ourſelves ſo much the more, as it is certain that no Aſſociation in Vice can ſecure thoſe that join in it: For it is expreſsly ſaid, *tho' Hand join in Hand, the Wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed* *. So will your Obedience be the more acceptable, in Proportion to the Degree in which it is ſingular. Were there not one praying Family in the whole Nation, in the whole World, methinks it ſhould inſtigate you to the Practice, rather than tempt you to the Neglect, and you ſhould preſs on as ambitious of the Glory of *leading the Way:* For what could be a nobler Object of Ambition, than to be pointed out by the bleſſed GOD himſelf, as *Job* was; of whom he ſaid, with a Kind of Triumph, *Haſt thou conſidered my Servant* Job, *that there is none like him in the Land,* or even *on the Earth* †? But bleſſed be GOD, this ſuppoſed *univerſal Neglect* is far from being the Caſe. Let

* Prov. xi. 21. † Job i. 8.

Let it however rejoice us, if GOD may ſay, "There are ſuch and ſuch Families, diſtinguiſhable from thoſe in their Neighbourhood "on this Account; as prevalent as the Neglect "of *Family-Prayer* is, they have the Reſolution "to practiſe it, and, like my Servant *Daniel*, "fear not the Reproach and Contempt which "profane and ungodly Men may caſt upon "them, if they may but honour me and engage my Favour: *I know them; I hearken and "hear, and a Book of Remembrance is written before me for them that fear me, and think on my "Name* *." Nor ſhould you urge,

3. "THAT you have *ſo much Buſineſs of "another Kind*, as not to be able to attend to "this."

I MIGHT cut this Objection ſhort at once, by applying to your Conſcience, whether you have not Time for many other Things, which you know to be of much leſs Importance. How many Hours in a Week do you find for Amuſement, while you have none for Devotion in your Family? And do you indeed hold the Bleſſing of GOD ſo very cheap, and think it a Matter of ſo little Importance, that you conclude your Buſineſs muſt ſucceed the worſe, if a few Minutes were daily taken ſolemnly to ſeek it together? Let me rather admoniſh you, that the greater your Buſineſs is, the more need you have to pray earneſtly, that your Hearts may not be ingroſſed by it. And I would beg

* Mal. iii. 16.

Leave further to remind you, that if your Hurry of Buſineſs were indeed ſo great as the Objection ſuppoſes, (which I believe is ſeldom the Caſe,) Prudence alone might ſuggeſt, that you ſhould endeavour to contract it. For there are certain Boundaries, beyond which a wiſe and faithful Care cannot extend; and as an Attempt to go beyond theſe Boundaries has generally its Foundation in Avarice, it often has its End in Poverty and Ruin. But if you were ever ſo ſecure of ſucceding for this World, how dear might you and your Children pay for that Succeſs, if all the bleſſed Conſequences of *Family-Religion*, for Time, and for Eternity, were to be given up as the Price of that very ſmall Part of your Gains, which is owing to the Minutes you take from theſe Exerciſes, that you may give them to the World? For you plainly perceive the Queſtion is only about *them*, and by no means about a ſtrenuous Application to the proper Duties of your ſecular Calling through the Day. And if you *will be rich* upon ſuch *profane Terms* as are here ſuppoſed, (for truly I can call then no better than *profane*,) you will probably *plunge yourſelf into* final *Perdition*, and may in the mean Time *pierce yourſelf through with many Sorrows* *; while religious Families learn by bleſſed Experience, that *the Bleſſing of the* LORD, which they are ſo often imploring together *maketh rich, and addeth no Sorrow with it* †; or that *a little with the Fear of the* LORD *is better than great Treaſure, with* that intermingled *Trouble* ‖, which in the Neglect of GOD muſt neceſſa-

* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10 † Prov. x. 22. ‖ Prov. xv. 16.

neceſſarily be expected. But I conclude that yet more will be objecting,

4 "THAT they *want Ability* for a Work "of this Kind."

To this I muſt in the firſt Place reply, that where the Heart is rightly diſpoſed, it does not require any *uncommon Abilities* to diſcharge *Family Worſhip* in a decent and edifying Manner. *The Heart of a wiſe* and good *Man*, in this reſpect *teacheth his Mouth, and addeth Knowledge to his Lips* *; and *out of the Fulneſs of it*, when it is indeed full of pious Affections, *the Mouth will* naturally *ſpeak* †. And if it ſpeak naturally, and in the main properly, it is enough. There is no need at all of ſpeaking elegantly. The plaineſt and ſimpleſt Language, in Addreſſes to the Majeſty of Heaven, appears to me far preferable to laboured, pompous, and artificial Expreſſions. Plain ſhort Sentences, uttered juſt as they riſe in the Mind, will be beſt underſtood by them that join with you. And it ſhould on ſuch Occaſions be our Endeavour, to *let ourſelves down*, as much as poſſible, to the Underſtanding of the leaſt and meaneſt of them: And this will in itſelf be more pleaſing to GOD, than any Thing which ſhould proceed from Oſtentation and Parade.

I MUST alſo deſire you to conſider, how many *Helps* you may eaſily procure. The *Scripture* is a large and noble Magazine of the moſt proper Sentiments, and moſt expreſſive Language;

* Prov. xvi. 23. † Luke vi. 45.

which, if you will attend to with a becoming Regard, will ſoon *furniſh you for every good Word and Work*, and moſt apparently for this. And beſides this, we have in our Language a great Variety of excellent *Forms of Prayer*, for Families as well as for private Perſons*; which you may uſe, at leaſt at firſt, with great Profit. And if it be too laborious to you to learn them by Heart, or if having learnt them you dare not truſt your Memory, what ſhould forbid your *reading them* reverently and devoutly? I hope I ſhall give no Offence to any good Chriſtian by ſaying, but on this Occaſion I ſhould offend my Conſcience by not ſaying, that I have long thought an irreconcileable Averſion to *Forms of Prayer*, even of human Compoſition, as vain a Superſtition, as a paſſionate Attachment to them. And if any had rather, that a Family ſhould be prayerleſs, than that a well choſen Form ſhould be gravely and ſolemnly read in it, I think he judges as abſurdly, as if he would rather ſee them ſtarving to Death, than fed out of a Diſh whoſe Materials or Shape are diſagreeable to him. The main Thing is, that GOD be reverently and ſincerely adored, that ſuitable Bleſſings, temporal and ſpiritual, be ſought from him for our-

* I muſt beg Leave on this Occaſion to mention and recommend two excellent Collections of this Kind, *Jenks's Devotions*, and *The Family Prayer Book*. Readers of almoſt every Taſte may find themſelves ſuited by one or the other of theſe; and there are many admirably devout and judicious Forms in both, which I ſhould think every wiſe and good Man might hear with Pleaſure and Improvement, and to every Clauſe of which he might put his moſt hearty *Amen*.

ourſelves and others, and cordial Thankſgivings returned to him for the various Gifts of his continual Bounty: And if this be done, the Circumſtances of doing it, though I cannot think them quite indifferent, are comparatively of ſmall Importance. I know by ſure Experience, in a great Variety of Inſtances, that it is very poſſible for Chriſtians of no extraordinary Genius, and with a very low Education, to acquit themſelves honourably in Prayer without the Aſſiſtance of *Forms:* And they who at firſt need them may, and probably, if they ſeriouſly ſet about it, would ſoon outgrow that Need. But if they did not, GOD might be glorified, and Families edified, by the continued Uſe of ſuch Helps. And on the whole, if it be indeed come to this, that you will rather ſacrifice all the Benefits of *Family-Prayer*, than ſubmit to the Trouble of reading, or appointing another to read, a well compoſed Addreſs, which perhaps, with a ſmall Portion of Scripture before it, might not take up one Quarter of an Hour's Time, indeed, indeed, you muſt be condemned by GOD, and your own Conſcience. In ſuch a View both muſt teſtify, that it is neither Want of Leiſure, nor Want of Ability, that prevents your diſcharging your Duty, but a ſtupid Indifference about it, or rather a wretched Averſion to it; the natural Conſequence of which might, if a little reflected upon, be ſufficient to throw the moſt careleſs and arrogant Sinner into an awful Alarm, if not a trembling Conſternation.

I APPREHEND, that the moſt plauſible Objections have now been canvaſſed; for I ſuppoſe,

poſe, few will be ſo weak and cowardly, as to plead,

5. "THAT their Domeſticks *will not ſub-*
"*mit* to the Introduction of ſuch Orders as
"theſe."

BUT as this may be ſecretly thought of, where it would not be pleaded, eſpecially where theſe Duties have unhappily been omitted when Families were firſt formed, and in their moſt flexible and pliant State, I will beſtow a few Words on his Head.

AND here I muſt deſire, that you would not raſhly conclude this to be the Caſe, with reſpect to your own. Do not think ſo unkindly of your Domeſticks, if they be not extreamly wicked indeed, as to imagine they would be ſecretly diſcontented with ſpending a little Time daily in hearing the Word of God, and being preſent at your domeſtick Devotion; much leſs ſhould you allow yourſelf to think, till it appears in Fact, that they will have the Arrogance openly to diſpute ſo reaſonable a Determination as this. Perhaps on the contrary, they are even now ſecretly wiſhing, that GOD would put it into your Heart to make the Attempt; and thinking with a Kind of tender Regret, "Why are "we denied ſuch a Bleſſing, when the Mem-"bers of this and that Family in the Neigh-"bourhood are favoured with it?"

BUT if it be indeed as you ſuppoſe, that they would think of it with a ſecret Averſion, and come into it with apparent Reluctance, if they

can

can be induced to come into it at all; you would do well to reflect, Whether this Profaneneſs and Perverſeneſs may not, in a great Meaſure at leaſt, be owing to that very Neglect which I am now preſſing you to reform? which if it be, it ought certainly to convince you in the moſt powerful and effectual Manner, of the Neceſſity of endeavouring to repair as ſoon as poſſible the Miſchief already done. And if there be really an *Oppoſition*, you ought to let any in whom you diſcover it know, that your Meaſures are fixed, and that you *cannot* and *will not* reſign that juſt Authority, which the Laws of GOD and Man give you in your own Houſe, to the Petulancy of their Humour, or the Impiety of their unhappy Temper. Make the Trial, whether they will dare to break with you, rather than ſubmit to ſo eaſy a Condition, as that of being preſent at your Hours of Family-Worſhip. If it be *a Servant* that diſputes it, you will no doubt think it a great Bleſſing to your Family to rid it of ſo deteſtable a Member, in that Relation. And if it be *a Child*, grown up to Years that ſhould be Years of Diſcretion, that ſets himſelf againſt this Reformation, (and it is not poſſible that any others ſhould *oppoſe* you,) tho' it is certain, that, where-ever ſuch *a Son of Belial* be, he muſt be a great Grief to your Heart, you will be delivered from a great deal of Diſtreſs which the Sight of his Wickedneſs muſt daily give you, by refuſing him a Place in your own Family, which he would only diſgrace and corrupt, and leaving him to practiſe thoſe Irregularities and Scandals

which

which always go along with ſuch a preſumptuous Contempt of Religion, any where elſe rather than under your own Roof.

I CAN think of but one Objection more, and that is,

6. "THAT you may not know *how to introduce* a Practice which you have ſo long "neglected."

BUT this is an Objection ſo very ſoon removed, that I hope, if nothing elſe lie in the Way, your Family will not continue another Week in the unhappy Circumſtances in which your Negligence has hitherto kept it. I were unworthy the Name of a Miniſter of the Goſpel, if, whatever my other Engagements are, I were not willing to give you my utmoſt Aſſiſtance, as ſoon as poſſible, in ſo good a Work as the Reformation of this great and lamentable Evil. Far from thinking it a Trouble to viſit you, and ſpend an Hour with you upon ſuch an Occaſion; who would not eſteem it a Refreſhment, and a Bleſſing, to come and inform your Domeſticks, when gathered together for this Purpoſe, how wiſe and happy a Reſolution you had taken, to repreſent the Reaſon they have to rejoice in it, and to bleſs GOD who had inſpired you with it? And how ſweet a Work would it be to perform it, as for the firſt Time, imploring the Bleſſings of Providence and Grace on you and yours, and intreating thoſe Aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit, which may qualify you more abundantly for diſcharging your peculiar Part

in

in it, and may render it the ſucceſsful Means of planting, or of ſupporting and animating, a Principle of true Religion in every Soul under your Care? Nor would the Joy and Delight be confined, to the Minutes ſpent with you at ſuch a Seaſon: It would be carried home to the Study, and to the Houſe of GOD: And the very Remembrance of it would for Years to come, encourage to other Attempts of Uſefulneſs, and ſtrengthen our Hands in the Work of the LORD.

AND O my dear Friend, whoever you are, be not aſhamed, that a Miniſter ſhould on this Occaſion tell your Children and Servants, that you are ſenſible of your former Neglect, and are determined in the Strength of GOD to practiſe a Duty, which it has indeed been criminal hitherto to omit. This is a mean and unworthy Shame, and would prevent our reforming Evils which are indeed ſhameful. It will be a Glory to you, to be willing and ſolicitous to revive languiſhing Religion; a Glory, to give to other Families an Example, which, if they have the Wiſdom and Courage to follow it, will undoubtedly bring down a rich Variety of Bleſſings on themſelves, and, if followed by conſiderable Numbers, on the Publick. At leaſt, it will be an Honour to you in the Sight of Men, and what is infinitely more, in the Sight of GOD, to have made the generous Effort; and not to make the guilty Neglect of former Years, an Excuſe for continuing to neglect, what it ſhould rather be a powerful Argument immediately to practiſe.

BUT

BUT I would by no Means inſiſt upon it, that Divine Worſhip ſhould be introduced into your Family in the particular Manner I have recommended. Uſe your own Judgment, and purſue your own Inclination; ſo that it be but effectually and immediately done. You may perhaps think it convenient to call them together, and read over *this Letter* to them; telling them at the Concluſion, that you are in your Conſcience convinced there is Reaſon in it which cannot be anſwered, and that therefore you are reſolved to act agreeably to it. You may then proceed to read a Portion of Scripture, and to pray with them in ſuch a Manner as you may think moſt expedient. But in whatever Manner it be done, you will remember, that it muſt be with Reverence and Solemnity, and with unfeigned Fervour of Devotion, as in the Sight of the Heart-ſearching GOD. And you will farther remember, that when once introduced, it muſt be reſolutely and conſtantly carried on; for to caſt out this heavenly Gueſt, will in ſome Degree be more ſhameful, than not to admit it. But I hope, ſweet Experience of the Pleaſure of theſe Duties will be inſtead of a thouſand Arguments, to engage your Adherence to them. May GOD give you Reſolution *immediately* to make the Attempt! and may He aſſiſt and accept you, and ſcatter down every deſirable Bleſſing of Providence and of Grace, on you and yours! So that *this Day*, (for I hope it will be introduced this very Day,) may become memorable in your Lives, as a Seaſon from whence you may date a Proſperity and a Joy hitherto unknown,

known, how happy ſoever you may have been in former Years: For very imperfect, I am ſure, muſt that Domeſtick Happineſs be, in which Domeſtick Religion has no Part.

How ſhall I congratulate myſelf, if in Conſequence of the Repreſentation and Addreſs I have now been making to you, I may be the bleſſed Inſtrument in the Divine Hand of inſpiring you with ſuch a Reſolution! What an additional Bond will then be added to our Friendſhip, while GOD continues us together in Life! Yea, what an everlaſting Bond of a nobler Friendſhip, in a future State; where it will be, before the Throne of GOD, my Joy to have given ſuch Admonitions as theſe, and yours faithfully and obediently to have received them!

BUT if after all you will not be perſuaded, but will hearken to the Voice of Cowardice, and Sloth, and Irreligion, in Defiance of ſo many awakening and affecting Reaſons, you muſt anſwer it at large. If your Children and Servants grow up in the Neglect of GOD, and pierce your Heart with thoſe Sorrows, which ſuch Servants, and eſpecially ſuch Children, are like to occaſion; if they raiſe profane and profligate Families; if they prove the Curſe of their Country, as well as the Torment and Ruin of thoſe moſt intimately related to them; the Guilt is in part yours, and (I repeat it again,) you muſt anſwer it to GOD at the great Day, that you have omitted the proper and appointed Method of preventing ſuch fatal Evils. In the mean Time, you muſt anſwer the Omiſſion to your own Conſcience; which probably has not been eaſy in

former Days, and in future Days may be yet more unquiet. Yes, Sir, the Memory of this Addreſs may continue, to *torment* you, if it cannot *reform* you: And if you do not forſake the Houſe of GOD as well as exclude GOD and his Worſhip from your own Houſe, you will meet with new Wounds; for new Exhortations and Admonitions will arm Reflection with new Reproaches. And in this uncomfortable Manner you will probably go on, till what has been the Grief and Shame of your Life, become the Affliction of your dying Bed; nor dare I preſume to aſſure you, that GOD will anſwer your laſt Cries for Pardon. The beſt you can expect under the Conſciouſneſs of this Guilt is, to paſs trembling to your final Doom:—But whatever that Doom be, you muſt acquit your Miniſter who has given you this faithful Warning*; and this Letter, tranſcribed as it were in the Records of the Divine Omniſcience, ſhall teſtify, that a Matter of ſo great Importance hath not been wholly neglected, hath not been coldly and ſlightly urged, by,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend,
and faithful Servant,
in our Common LORD,

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton,
Dec. 20, 1749.

* If this Letter ſhould be preſented by any of my Brethren in the Miniſtry to any of their Hearers, they may eaſily ſee, that this Expreſſion is applicable to them, as well as to thoſe who may receive it from my Hands.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

TO prevent, as far as poſſible, any Objection which might ariſe from not having any proper *Form* juſt at Hand, I ſhall here ſubjoin Two, which I will recommend to thoſe who may happen not to be better provided. The firſt is indeed, (ſo far as I know,) pretty peculiar, being intended for a Family into which Prayer is juſt going to be introduced, after having been long neglected: The other is for Morning or Evening, with ſuch proper Variations to ſuit either, as common Senſe will direct. And I deſire it may be obſerved, that it may well be uſed as a Directory to thoſe, who do not chuſe to uſe it as a Form. And I apprehend, it may be moſt ſerviceable in this View; as my Deſire to reduce it within narrow Limits, and yet to ſuggeſt as many Thoughts as poſſible, hath obliged me to ſuch Conciſeneſs of Expreſſion, that the Ideas are varied faſter than many Capacities may conveniently admit. But I pray GOD to enlarge your Heart, that you may expatiate upon theſe Hints to your own Edification, and that of all thoſe that join with you.

A

PRAYER,

Which may be uſed as an Introduction to a Stated Courſe of *Family-Prayer*, where it hath been formerly neglected.

O Moſt Great and Glorious God! When we conſider Thee, as the gracious Author of all thoſe Mercies which we enjoy in our Perſons and in our Family, we have great Reaſon to humble ourſelves before Thee, that we have not more ſolemnly acknowledged that Goodneſs, on which we have ſo long and ſo comfortably ſubſiſted. Juſtly mighteſt Thou, O Thou Almighty Jehovah, have poured out Thy Fury upon thoſe, that herein have acted as if they knew Thee not, even upon this Family which hath not called on Thy Name. But confeſſing and lamenting this our ſinful and inexcuſable Neglect, we earneſtly intreat Thee through Jesus Christ to pardon it, and to accept and ſtrengthen the Reſolution, which in Depen-

Dependance on thy Grace we would now form to be for the future diligent in it, and to do all we can in our reſpective Stations, to encourage and ſupport it.

And we intreat Thee to bleſs thoſe religious Opportunities, which as a Family we may enjoy. Enable us to hear Thy Word with due Attention: Open our Minds to all the Inſtructions we receive from it, and bow our Hearts to humble Obedience.

Be favourably preſent with us, when we are offering our Addreſſes to Thy Throne! While we are adoring Thine Infinite Perfections, may we feel a reverent and joyful Senſe of them upon our Hearts! While we confeſs our Sins before Thee, may we inwardly abhor them and mourn over them, and be inſpired with firm Reſolutions, that we will never return to them any more, but will guard againſt every Appearance of Evil! Excite in our Souls earneſt Deſires after thoſe Spiritual Bleſſings, which we aſk at Thine Hands! May we intercede for others with fervent Charity! May we acknowledge Thy Mercies with the moſt lively Gratitude, and devote ourſelves to Thee with full Purpoſe of Heart!

And on the whole, may every one of us find the Divine Life growing and advancing in our Souls by every Opportunity of this Nature; that we may rejoice in each other, and in Thee; and that true Religion being firmly eſtabliſhed in our own Hearts, may by our Means be communicated to others, ſo far as our Influence over them may extend; till

at length, having worſhipped Thee together in ſuch Inſtitutions as theſe in an holy and acceptable Manner, we may join that large and bleſſed Family above, which is for ever rejoicing in Thy Preſence; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, to whom with Thee, O Ftaher, and Thine Holy Spirit, be everlaſting Praiſes. *Amen!*

A PRAYER

A

PRAYER for a *Family*,

To be uſed either *Morning* or *Evening*, with ſuch Variations as may eaſily be underſtood by any who are able to read it.

MOST Great, Eternal, and Ever-Bleſſed GOD! We Thine unworthy Creatures deſire at this Time with all Humility to bow ourſelves down in Thine awful and majeſtick Preſence, acknowledging Thine infinite Perfections and Glories.—[We adore Thee, as the firſt and the laſt, the greateſt and the beſt of Beings; who art originally and neceſſarily poſſeſſed of Knowledge and Power, Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs, Holineſs and Truth, Mercy and Goodneſs, in Degrees which no other Being can conceive.]—We pay Thee our Homage, as the Author and Support of univerſal Nature, the Lord and Life of the Creation. We acknowledge ourſelves Thy Creatures, *Adoration.*

whoſe Bodies and Souls have been formed by Thine Hand, and continually maintained and defended by Thy Care and Favour.

Confeſſion.

MOST juſtly mighteſt Thou therefore, O our Heavenly Father, have expected from us the moſt conſtant Gratitude, Duty, and Obedience: But we humbly confeſs before Thee, (and we deſire to do it with the deepeſt Humiliation and Shame, Remorſe and Sorrow,) that we have been very much wanting in thoſe Returns; yea, that we have all moſt grievouſly offended Thee.—[We confeſs, O Thou Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD, that we are polluted and guilty Creatures, and ſo moſt unworthy and unfit to appear in Thy Preſence.]—We acknowledge, O LORD, that we were ſhapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did our Mothers conceive us; and that we have, from our very Childhood, been renewing our Provocations and Tranſgreſſions in our Thoughts, our Words, and our Actions; and all theſe attended with Circumſtances of high Aggravation.—[We own and lament, O Thou moſt gracious Sovereign, that we have in numberleſs Inſtances, negligently, yea and preſumptuouſly broken thoſe wiſe and holy Laws, which Thou gaveſt us for our Good; and that by the Breach of them we have deſerved Thy righteous Diſpleaſure:]—So that we might have been made Examples of Juſtice, and Spectacles of Miſery, to all Thy rational Creation.—[We might long ſince have been cut off from this pleaſant Abode which Thy Goodneſs has

aſſigned

aſſigned us, and from all the Comforts Thou haſt given us in it, and been ſet down to everlaſting Darkneſs, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.]

BUT we humbly implore Thy Pardon and Mercy in CHRIST JESUS our LORD, Thine only begotten and well-beloved Son; who hath by Thine Appointment, *Petition for Pardon and Grace in Chriſt.*

O compaſſionate Father, viſited this World of ours, not only to give it the moſt excellent Inſtructions, confirmed by the moſt aſtoniſhing Miracles, and recommended by the moſt amiable Example; but alſo to redeem us to GOD by His Blood, and to offer up His own Life a Sacrifice for us.—[He was delivered for our Offences, and raiſed again for our Juſtification: And as he is now aſcended into Heaven, there to make a prevailing Interceſſion for all that come unto GOD through Him,]—we preſume to approach Thy ſacred Preſence with all becoming Regards to Him, humbly pleading that atoning Blood which He ſhed on the Croſs, and that all-perfect Merit and Righteouſneſs of His, by which alone Sinners may draw near unto Thee with Acceptance. And we intreat Thee for His Sake, and in Regard to our Relation to Him, fully and freely to forgive us all our numberleſs Tranſgreſſions, and to be graciouſly reconciled to us; yea, to take us, unworthy as we are, into the Number of Thy dear Children. For His Sake we alſo humbly intreat Thee, to free us from the Power of Sin, as well as from its Guilt.

Guilt. Shed down, O Thou God of all Grace, Thine Holy Spirit upon our Hearts in a rich Abundance, to inſpire us with a Hatred of every Thing that is diſpleaſing to Thee, and to form us to a Love of univerſal Goodneſs, and a Deſire of making continual Improvements in it!

[FILL us, O LORD, we humbly beſeech Thee, with a fervent Love to Thy bleſſed Self! In all Things may we be obedient to Thine Holy Precepts, and ſubmiſſive to Thy wiſe and gracious Diſpoſal! May we be united to CHRIST by a ſincere Faith, which ſhall work by Love, and ſhew itſelf in keeping His Commandments, as well as truſting His Atonement, Interceſſion, and Grace! May we be always led by the Holy Spirit of GOD, and cheriſh His Influence on our Hearts as the Spirit of Holineſs and of Love! To our Brethren of Mankind may we be ſtrictly juſt, and affectionately kind, doing to others as we could reaſonably deſire they ſhould do to us, and rejoicing in every Opportunity of advancing their Temporal or Spiritual Happineſs!]

WHILE we continue here in this uncertain World, give us, if it be Thy bleſſed Will, Food to eat, and Raiment to put on, Health of Body, and Chearfulneſs of Mind, and whatever other Enjoyments Thou ſeeſt neceſſary to make our Journey through Life comfortable! But let us not have our Portion on Earth! May our Hearts be more and more indifferent to it, and our Views continually raiſed above it!—[May we learn to govern

with ſtrict Authority our Appetites and Paſſions, and to deny ourſelves where-ever the Precepts of Thy Goſpel require it! On the whole, may every Part of our Conduct, in every Relation and Circumſtance of Life, adorn Religion; and may the Luſtre of our good Works engage many around us to glorify our Father in Heaven!]—May we continually remember the Shortneſs of Time, and the Importance of Eternity; and behave in ſuch a Manner, that ſhould we be ſummoned away ever ſo ſuddenly, Death may not be a terrible, but a joyful Surprize! Support us, O LORD, in our laſt Extremities, and help us to honour Thee by our dying Behaviour! Receive our departing Spirits to the Embraces of Thy Mercy, and give us a triumphant Part in the Reſurrection of the Juſt!

WE pray for the Advancement of Thy Goſpel in the World, and for the Converſion of *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Faith as it is in JESUS. We pray, O LORD, for the Progreſs and Improvement of the Reformation, Abroad and at Home. We affectionately recommend to Thee our only rightful Sovereign King GEORGE, and all the Branches of his Family; intreating Thee to continue to us by their Means, the invaluable Bleſſing of the Proteſtant Succeſſion. We intreat Thee by Thy Grace to animate all, who are diſtinguiſhed by Power, Riches, or other Advantages, that they may improve all their Talents for the Publick Good: And we earneſtly

Intercession.

earneſtly pray, that the Miniſters of Thy Goſpel of every Denomination, may with united Affection, ardent Zeal, and eminent Succeſs, be carrying on the Work of the LORD!

MAY it pleaſe Thee, O Thou God of Mercy, to ſpread among Chriſtians of every Profeſſion a Spirit of Forbearance, Candor, and Love; and to viſit all that are in any Kind of Affliction, whether Perſonal or Relative, of Mind, Body, or Eſtate! Graciouſly ſupport them under their Sorrows, and in Thine own Time ſend them Deliverance!

WE beſeech Thee to bleſs us as a Family; whether we preſide over it, or belong to it, as Children, Sojourners, or Servants, may we all be found in a faithful Diſcharge of our Duty to Thee, and to each other! May our united and retired Devotions be ſo performed, as to have the happieſt Influence on our Temper and our Conduct!

AND now, O moſt Gracious and Merciful Father, we deſire with all our Hearts to bleſs and adore Thine Holy Name, for all Thy great and unmerited Goodneſs to us, and to the whole Human Race. We praiſe Thee for our Creation and Preſervation, for Health and Eaſe, for Food and Raiment, for Liberty and Safety, for Friends and Succeſs; and above all, for our Redemption, for the ineſtimable Privilege of approaching to Thee through a Mediator, and for the rich and full Proviſion

Thankſgiving.

Thou

Thou haſt made in Him for the Forgiveneſs of our daily Sins, for our receiving all the Supplies of Grace we ſtand in need of here, and our enjoying everlaſting Happineſs hereafter. And under a Senſe of Thy Mercies, we deſire to devote ourſelves to Thee as the LORD our GOD, and renew our Covenant with Thee through our LORD JESUS CHRIST; humbly reſolving by the Aſſiſtance of Thy Spirit and Grace, to ſerve Thee with all good Fidelity unto the End of our Lives.

WE particularly bleſs Thee for the Mercies of the Day [or Night] paſt, and would humbly commit ourſelves to Thy gracious Protection and Favour this Night, [or Day,] intreating Thee to guard us from all Evil, and to grant that at our next aſſembling together, we may have reaſon to unite our Praiſes for the Continuance of Thy Goodneſs: And may we be perpetually advancing in our Preparation for that Heavenly World, where we hope to worſhip Thee without any of thoſe Imperfections which now attend us; which we aſk and hope, through the Merits of Thy Son CHRIST JESUS, in whom we have Righteouſneſs and Strength, and in whoſe Name and Words we conclude our Addreſſes, calling on Thee as Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name: Thy Kingdom come: Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven: Give us this Day our daily Bread: And forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us: And lead us

not

not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen!*

N. B. As this Prayer may be deliberately read over in about Ten Minutes, or leaving out what is included in *Crotchets* in half a Quarter of an Hour, I think I may take it for granted, that the Affair is brought to a Criſis: For if juſt after reading this Letter, being thus diſarmed of every Excuſe as to the Want of neceſſary Helps, you will not call your Family together to attend to it for ſo ſmall a Space of Time, or to put up ſome other Petitions with them, I fear it is a ſad Sign, you will live and die in the Neglect of this important Duty, and I muſt leave you to anſwer it in the Preſence of GOD.

FINIS.

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